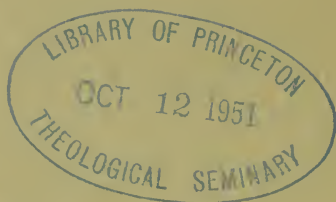


J.Q. Bittinger, Pastor.

Centennial Discourse

First Congregational Church
Haverhill, N.H.

BX7150
H35F5
B6



BX7150
.H35F5
B6



CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE.

BX 7150

.H35 F5

B6

CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE.

—o—

A HISTORY

OF THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

HAVERHILL, N. H.

BY

J. Q. BITTINGER, PASTOR.

—o—

PRINTED BY
THE CLAREMONT MANUFACTURING COMPANY,
CLAREMONT, N. H.



NOTE.

July 9, 1876, was recommended to the Congregational churches of New Hampshire as a day for holding Centennial services. The Church in Haverhill observed the day by two services, one in the morning, on which occasion the following sketch of the church formed a principal part of the exercises, the other in the afternoon which was devoted to the Sabbath school. Short addresses were made by the superintendent, P. H. Kimball, giving a history of the school from its organization; by Rev. James Aiken on the origin and history of Sabbath schools in general; and by Dr. Phineas Spaulding on the relation of Sabbath school work to the conversion of souls.

DISCOURSE.

Amongst the many forces which have wrought during the past century in the wonderful progress and civilization of our country, the foremost place must be assigned the Christian church. Without entering into a discussion of the general proposition, it will be my chief purpose on the present occasion to give a sketch of this church and trace its influence on the moral and religious welfare of this community. Like every other Christian church its lines of light and power have extended far beyond those who are the object of its more immediate care—its good and noble work going forward wherever any of its members maintain a living Christian faith and example. Its chief labor is here; it has also a part in the general moulding of the nation's moral life.

The first Congregational Church of Haverhill was organized October 13, 1790, about thirty years after the settlement of the town. The early inhabitants were principally from Massachusetts, and were distinguished for their strict religious principles and their regard for the Sabbath. The town of Newbury, Vt., was settled about the same time that Haverhill was, and both settlements were intimately related in their religious affairs,—the people of Haverhill attending divine service in Newbury for the most part until the organization of this church. At a town meeting of the proprietors of Newbury in the summer of 1763,—the year in which both Newbury and Haverhill were chartered,—it was voted “to unite with Haverhill in paying a preacher for the term of two or three months this fall and winter.” The year following a church

was organized at Newbury composed of members from both sides of the river, and also an ecclesiastical society was formed, and this union continued for nearly twenty years. The church at Newbury was the first church organized in the Connecticut Valley north of Charlestown, N. H., the Rev. Peter Powers being its first pastor. So remote was the church from sister churches that in calling a council for installation it was voted that the place of meeting should be "down country where it was thought best," Hollis, N. H. being selected as the place. Mr. Powers preached his own installation sermon. During the Revolutionary war from fear of the tories and Indians, Mr. Powers took refuge on this side of the river in the house of Col. Johnston, a member of his church, preaching occasionally in a block house to the soldiers and inhabitants. This block house was situated on the premises now occupied by the residence of Mr. Harry Johnston and sister. After his dismissal from Newbury, in 1782, he preached for a year or more at Haverhill. From the close of his labors here until 1791 there was no stated preaching in the town. During this interval of about six or seven years efforts were made by vote of the town to secure preaching, but owing to a want of harmony between the north end and the south end those efforts were defeated. In January, 1788, it was voted to divide the town into two parishes, but this vote was not carried into effect. Subsequently, in 1789, an article was put in the warrant to see if the town would raise money for preaching, but the proposition was defeated. The inhabitants of the south end now petitioned the Legislature for a division of the town in the hope that by such division they could secure the preaching of the gospel, and alleged this as the reason of their petition. Meantime at a town meet-

ing in 1790 a vote was carried to raise £ 40 for preaching which seems to have been spent for that purpose. In August of the same year a town meeting was held to see if the town would unite in the settlement of a minister who should preach part of the time at the meeting house at the south end and part of the time in the Court House or some place in Horse-meadow in proportion to the taxes paid at each end of the town, and a committee was appointed and directed to hire the Rev. Mr. Bell on probation. The people seem to have been quite earnest in this movement, since in September of the same year, the £ 40 being nearly expended, the town voted another £ 40 for the same purpose.

The moral and religious condition of the community during the somewhat long period when they were deprived of the preached gospel had become very alarming. Iniquity and irreligion held full sway. Practically there was no Sabbath, and only three persons in all the south part of the town were professing Christians. Two of these were Col. Charles Johnston and the Hon. James Woodward. But in the midst of this moral waste and wickedness thoughts of God came into the hearts of men. "When I thought of the Sabbath-breaking, and that there were no people here to pray for me," was the remark of one, "I became alarmed." Certainly, a valid ground for alarm. A powerful revival of religion now began and prevailed so universally in all the south end, that not a family from the Piermont line to the Dow farm was unmoved. The people being without a religious guide the Rev. Dr. Barroughs of Hanover came upon the ground and did the work of a faithful pastor, visiting from house to house, and speaking and praying with the people. And

thus whilst the dissensions of men were defeating the efforts for a permanent ministry, God caused the "wrath of men to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrained."

This religious awakening was the beginning of this church which was organized with a membership of twenty three persons. The Rev. Eden Burroughs D. D., of Hanover, the Rev. Mr. Ward of Plymouth, and Dr. Asa Burton of Thetford, Vt., assisted in the organization. Others were soon added to its membership, amongst them a large number from Piermont who had withdrawn from the church in that place on account of its supposed unsoundness in the orthodox faith. *That* church is now extinct and must not be confounded with the present Congregational church of Piermont.

In the latter part of 1791 efforts were made to settle over the whole town Ethan Smith who was then preaching in Haverhill, but the plan fell through on various pretexts, one of which was that the salary, £70, would bankrupt the town. The conditions of settlement were then modified in order to meet the objections of those residing at the north end, and Mr. Smith accepted a call to become pastor of the church ; but the discordant elements were so great that they could not be harmonized, and accordingly a town-meeting was warned by the constable, on petition of citizens from the north end, to be held one day before the time appointed for Mr. Smith's ordination, at which meeting all votes passed in regard to his settlement were rescinded. The people of the south end however were not disposed to see themselves wrongfully defeated, and with commendable courage and a noble protest against such unjustifiable opposition,—after the conditions of settlement

were modified,—engaged to support Mr. Smith by voluntary subscriptions, and he was accordingly ordained as the first pastor of this church on the 25th of January, 1792. The council met at the house of Ezekiel Ladd, Esq., and was composed of Rev. Eden Burroughs and delegate, Hanover; Dr. Asa Burton and delegate, Thetford, Vt.; Rev. John Sawyer and delegate, Orford; Rev. Nathaniel Lambert and delegate, Newbury, Vt.; Rev. William Conant and delegate, Lyme; and Rev. Stephen Fuller, Vershire, Vt.

In April of the same year two deacons were chosen; Col. Charles Johnston, who had come from the church in Newbury, as first deacon, and Dr. Martin Phelps as second deacon. Col. Johnston was one of the earlier settlers of the town, a man of large ability and liberal mind, of great energy and distinguished patriotism, taking a prominent part in the battle of Bennington under Gen. Stark, and exercising a controlling influence in the affairs of the settlement. From the frequent mention of his name in the early records of the church and the numerous special duties which were assigned him, he was undoubtedly its most influential member and one on whom it could always rely. We are indebted to him for the beautiful park that adds so much to the attractiveness of our village, and also for land on which the Court House and Academy were built, in securing which to the place he took an active and prominent part. He represented the town in the legislature, and was Judge of Probate, and but for him it was said, speaking of the moral condition of the place, "Haverhill Corner would sink." He illustrates the fact that an enterprising spirit is not without its reward.

VIII

Out of the dissensions in regard to the settlement of Mr. Smith sprang a controversy between this church and the church in Newbury. It appears that two members of the church in Newbury living at the north end, and who seem to have belonged to the church militant,—they wore the titles of Captain,—took a very active part in defeating the settlement of Mr. Smith by the town, and with eighteen others refused to pay their part of the tax which had been voted for preaching. For this rebellious course they were cast into prison. The church in Haverhill feeling itself aggrieved by their unchristian course brought the matter to the attention of the church in Newbury, which after hearing the parties rebuked these two members for unchristian conduct. But this action of the church was soon afterward reversed, against which the church in Haverhill remonstrated, and the matter was referred to a mutual council whose decision was against the church in Newbury. But the erring church failing to carry out the advice of council, this church after much correspondence in regard to the matter and without receiving any satisfaction, was compelled in self-defence to call an ex-parte council whose decision coincided with that of the mutual council and was very decided in its tone. Their advice seems to have brought the church in Newbury to its Christian senses, and uniting again with the church in Haverhill a third council was called, consisting of the churches in Lyme, Sanbornton, and Salem, Mass., and their decision was a re-affirmation of the position taken by the two former councils. The matter was now happily concluded, and peace and good fellowship was restored to these alienated sister churches. The controversy illustrates the saying of Scripture, "How great a matter a little fire kindleth."

In addition to these external distractions in the early history of this church were corresponding internal distractions which greatly embarrassed its life and growth. There were numerous cases of discipline, ending many of them in excommunication ; five members were cut off for deserting the church and uniting with the Baptists, three for the sin of drunkenness, one for uncleanness, and others for unchristian conduct in business transactions, and others still for neglecting church ordinances and covenant vows. These unpleasant engrossments acted unfavorably upon the church, and as a consequence its progress was slow after the first year or so of Mr. Smith's ministry.

From the organization of the church until the Newbury difficulties began seventy-six were admitted to its membership ; but from that time till the close of Mr. Smith's ministry,—a period of five years,—only twelve were admitted. Mr. Smith was dismissed January 23, 1799 for want of adequate support. He was the author of a work on Revelation, and also wrote a history of the Indians, in which he maintained the theory that they were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. He was a man of more than ordinary ability and greatly esteemed by the church and people, and his ministry was fruitful of much good, notwithstanding the perplexities and trials of the church during the greater part of his administration.

The church remained without a minister for nearly four years, when on December 23, 1802, Mr. John. Smith was ordained as pastor. Previous to this the church extended a unanimous call to David B. Ripley, and requested the town to concur in the call and make suitable provision for his support, but the proposition it seems was not accepted. Afterward the town united in the support of

Mr. Smith who also preached at North Haverhill. It was in the early part of this ministry that the members from Piermont, some thirty in number, were dismissed for the purpose of organizing a new church there. Grave complications now beset the church, and resulted in Mr. Smith's dismissal, January 4, 1807.

A vacancy of eight years in the pastorate now followed and during all this time, including the last ministry, the church was greatly depressed and barren of life, so that in 1814, of the ninety-six persons which up to that time had become connected with it, *only twelve remained*. In this great decrease however must be reckoned the thirty that went off to Piermont. The out-look to human view was gloomy and discouraging, and the few that were left to testify for God were like the "poor and needy seeking water, and there was none, and their tongue failed for thirst." But in this dark, *dark* hour of the church and its great need of help, the promise came, "I the Lord will hear thee, I the God of Israel will not forsake thee. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness pools of water, and the dry land springs of water." And it was so. The windows of heaven were opened and the spiritual refreshing came down in a glorious revival which continued with more or less power for *nearly three years*. At the commencement of this awakening the church extended a call to the Rev. Grant Powers who was installed January 4, 1815. As the fruit of this revival fifty-eight were gathered into the church, among whom were many leading persons. Another awakening occurred in 1823, by which some twenty were admitted to the church, and during this ministry nearly one hundred were received in

all. Mr. Powers was dismissed April 28, 1829, on account of inadequate support and an unfortunate controversy with the Methodists. It was about the time of his settlement that the parish, which then embraced the whole town, was reduced to its present limits. Mr. Powers is familiarly known as the author of a "History of the Coos Country," in which he has gathered a multitude of interesting incidents and anecdotes illustrating the pioneer life of Northern New Hampshire. He was distinguished as a vigorous preacher, unflinching in his theology, which was decidedly Calvinistic, had a strong aversion to Arminianism, but in spite of his theological prejudices he was a man of excellent Christian character and highly esteemed.

Of those who came into the church in the extensive revival of 1814 we find the names of Chester Farman and Edmund Carleton, both of whom soon after were elected to the office of deacon. The latter was the esteemed village physician. Dea. Farman was a man of most excellent spirit and Christian influence, and though somewhat limited in his pecuniary means he had a large and generous heart. Such a man is always a help to a church. The "pound heart" will be very apt to enlarge the "penny purse," whilst the "penny heart" somehow almost always fails to find the "pound purse." In times of financial difficulty in the church he would say, "I wish I was rich, I would do so and so," and then would repeat what the good Scotch woman said, "*but I suppose the Lord don't trust me.*" He stood firmly by the church in times of disaffection and need.

There also came into the church at this time most excellent Christian women,—Rebecca D. Gookin the first

superintendent of the Sabbath school in Ladd street, and her sister Ann; Hannah Johnston also superintendent of the Sabbath school at the Corner, and Nancy Pearson, all earnest and active workers for Christ.

One other person, a young man then a member of Dartmouth College from Haverhill, came into the church under Mr. Powers' ministry. Soon after his admission he was appointed superintendent of the Sabbath school, a position which he continued to hold for nearly fifty years. Later he was elected to the office of deacon, and for almost half a century he has been actively associated with the history and work of this church. For now nearly a year on account of sickness and feeble health we have missed him from the sanctuary and the meetings of the church. I need hardly say I refer to our much-esteemed Dea. A. K. Merrill.

About the time of Mr. Power's dismissal from the pastorate of this church the present house of worship was bought. It was built by the Methodists, who owing to financial embarrassment sold it to the Congregational Church and Society. There was at this time some division in the church, arising from several causes, the principal of which was a difference of opinion in regard to candidates for settlement, and this difference was supplemented by a change of place for holding meetings, the people north of the Brook objecting to the greater distance they had to travel in going to church, but the change proved to be a wise one. As a compromise the third service was held in the old meeting house on Ladd street.

During the interval of nearly three years which followed Mr. Powers' dismissal the most powerful awakening occurred in the history of the church, known as the

revival of 1831. It began in May and continued through the greater part of the summer. As the result of the revival forty were admitted to the church on a single Sabbath, and about sixty in all. In August of that year the Rev. Henry Wood was invited to the pastorate of the church, and was installed in November following. His ministry here closed in the spring of 1835, when he became pastor of the church at Dartmouth College. He afterward was appointed Consul at Beirut, and later to a chaplaincy in the United States Navy, in which position he died a few years ago in Philadelphia.

The revival of 1831 greatly strengthened the church, bringing into it those who became active and devoted Christians,—Aaron P. Gould, now an honored deacon and a pillar in the church at Piermont; Merrill Pearson who went to Bloomington, Ill., and took his religion with him; Amos G. Bartlett afterward a preacher; Samuel Bean who also entered the ministry; Olivia L. B. Atherton who married Dr. Drew of Waterbury, Vt.; Sarah Merrill; Charlotte Osgood who married the late Daniel Blaisdell of Hanover.

The next pastorate in this church was that of the Rev. Joseph Gibbs who was installed June 16, 1835. Mr. Gibbs was a Scotchman and educated in London. Soon after his installation his health failed and he continued feeble during the whole of his brief ministry, dying within two years after his installation whilst pastor of the church. He sometimes preached when he was so weak that the introductory services were conducted by one of the deacons. Although no very marked interest prevailed during this time the church enjoyed a considerable degree of prosperity. Mr. Gibbs was greatly beloved by his people,

and his death was a severe loss to the church. He was a young man of remarkable promise, of great earnestness as a preacher, with large head, and a somewhat striking appearance in the pulpit.

In June 27, 1838, the pastorate of the Rev. Archibald Fleming^a began and lasted till September 23, 1841, when he was dismissed. Mr. Fleming was a Scotchman. It was during his ministry that the anti-slavery excitement swept over the churches in this region. Mr. Fleming carried the church safely through this critical period, but not without losing his hold on some of the people. During this controversy occurred the singular circumstance of one member of the church, who was more advanced in his anti-slavery sentiments than his brethren, excommunicating the whole church and refusing to walk with them in Christian fellowship. Notwithstanding these troublesome times about twenty were admitted to the church during Mr. Fleming's ministry of three years. In 1841 the Washingtonian temperance movement came on, stirring the entire community and resulting in a revival of religion. During this two-fold interest, temperance and religion, the church was without a pastor. But soon after, February 16, 1842, the Rev. Samuel Delano was installed over the church, and under his early ministry some forty were gathered into its fellowship, mostly converts in the revival which sprung out of the temperance movement. Many of these were from the Sabbath school. Mr. Delano was dismissed, January 14, 1847,—a man of imperious will, of much native vigor of mind, and somewhat eccentric. He was for more than thirty years one of the trustees of Dartmouth College.

This pastorate was followed by a period of over two years when the church was without a settled minister, the Rev. Moses C. Searle meantime officiating as acting pastor. This arrangement was made necessary on account of some divisions in the church ; nevertheless there was considerable religious interest in the year following Mr. Delano's dismissal. One circumstance in connection with this interest is very suggestive. In the house now owned and occupied by Mrs. Allen Bailey an inquiry meeting was in progress when the great fire broke out which consumed nearly all that part of the village on the west side of the park. So great was the consternation of the people in view of the appalling destruction that the religious feeling in the community immediately ceased, and did not again revive, illustrating the fact that the mind can be deeply engrossed only on one thing at a time. . But of those who came into the church during these two periods there were some earnest Christian workers. Alfred Nichols who afterwards was an efficient superintendent of the Sabbath school in Amesbury, Mass. ; R. V. C. Emerson now living in Boston ; Hale A. Johnson, a devoted worker in the West ; and an excellent sister, now a member of the church in Thetford, Vt., Mrs. Harriet Senter.

The first ministry of the Rev. E. H. Greeley began in November, 1849, at which time he was ordained pastor of the church. It was during the early part of this pastorate that the Rev. Mr. Gallagher, an evangelist, spent some time in Haverhill, and as the result of a religious interest then awakened some thirty were admitted to the church ; amongst them John L. Merrill and his brother Benjamin ; Mary Spalding, now Mrs. Towle of West-

field, N. J.; Ezra B. Adams, George H. Sinclair, Fanny M. Baker, Solon H. Baker, an active member of the Methodist church in East Haverhill, and Jason C. Spalding. Near the close of this ministry there was more than the usual interest in the church, and as a consequence of this quickening considerable additions were made to its membership; of those more earnest in their Christian lives were two sisters, one of whom was recently dismissed to the church in Littleton, a brother lately appointed to the office of deacon in the church, and previous to this a lad Levi Rodgers.

Mr. Greeley was dismissed January 6, 1858, and between the time of his pastorate and that of the Rev. John D. Emerson, the pulpit was supplied by Prof. Noyes of Dartmouth College and J. M. Chamberlain of Andover Theological Seminary. During this time a very general awakening prevailed in the community, and a large number were received into the fellowship of the church; of these was Lucien H. Frary now settled in the ministry.

Mr. Emerson was ordained October 1, 1858, and during his ministry there were several periods of more than usual interest, and the additions to the church were quite numerous. Of those who came in at that time were Charles N. Flanders, Charles H. Merrill, and Franklin P. Wood. Mr. Emerson was dismissed November 17, 1867, and about a year afterwards Mr. Greeley began his second pastorate in this church, remaining a little over five years. The cases are not numerous in which a minister after leaving a church, however friendly may have been the separation, is permitted to renew the pastoral relation, and in all such cases it bespeaks the mutual confidence and esteem of both parties.

Allow me now to offer one word of qualification. It must not be inferred because mention has been made of many individual members of this church that others were not equally genuine witnesses of the truth. Those who have been named may have been more active and conspicuous in their Christian lives and relation to the church, but the quiet Marys are as useful and praiseworthy often as the more active Marthas. Little too is known at this date of the earliest members of the church, but we may be sure of one thing from the sacrifices they made for the sake of the gospel, that they were noble Christian men and women; and the firm stand which they maintained in the grave and complicated trials of the church reveals in noble light their heroic faith and steadfast Christian principle. Then there are those still with us whom we all know to be worthy of praise, living epistles of the grace of God, known and read of all men. And from time to time this church has received additions to its membership from other churches of those whose Christian character and steadfast support have made them truly pillars of strength in Zion. And in justice it ought to be said that this church from first till now has always had those who though not members of its communion, were and are amongst its most generous and most faithful friends, men who have intelligent and appreciative views of the importance of maintaining the ordinances of the gospel and the moral safeguards which every community demands, and which alone can protect it against adverse and destructive forces. All praise to these unnamed worthy men and women!

In addition now to the brief sketch of the origin and growth of this church there are other elements in its

life and history which are worthy of mention. It has not only gathered into its fold those whose Christian lives and labors have been enjoyed here, but it has sent forth those whose good works and influence have gladdened other fields of Christian effort. Some of these have already been alluded to, whilst others, especially two classes, may with propriety be grouped at this point. First, the ministers which this church has furnished. Of these I find the names of Charles Johnston, grandson of Col. Charles Johnston, and a graduate of Dartmouth College in 1813. He studied theology with Grant Powers, afterwards spending some time with Dr. Lyman Beecher, at Litchfield, Conn.; was a home missionary and evangelist in Connecticut and New York, and associated for awhile with the distinguished Dr. Nettleton. His only settled pastorate was at Otisco, N. Y., over the Presbyterian church of that place. He was a man of energy, ability and piety, and very successful in his varied and extensive Christian labors. Michael Gray, son of Ebenezer Gray and Ruth Johnston, went to England and was educated in London, preaching in the metropolis or vicinity till 1812, when he returned to his native country. After remaining here about a year he went back to England, and of his subsequent career nothing definite is known. Tradition has it that he was a man of marked power as a preacher. Asa P. Tenny, a native of Corinth, Vt., came into the church in 1823, and was settled in Hebron and West Concord, a good and useful man. Amos G. Bartlett, a convert in the revival of 1831, preached for a time at Post Mills, Vt., but previous to his labors there as a minister, he was engaged in Sabbath school work in Boston. He now resides in Vineland, N. J. Samuel Beane, also a convert in the revival of 1831, was settled at Great Falls,

Little Campton, R. I., and Norton, Mass., where he died. Mr. Bean was an excellent and successful minister. Stephen Adams became a Methodist preacher, and though he did not unite with this church, he was brought up in its Sabbath school and dates here the beginning of his religious experience. His mother was a sister of the late Michael Johnston. Charles Barstow was for a time a Moravian preacher, afterwards he was settled over the Congregational church in Vernon, Mich. He dates his religious experience in the Sabbath school—a devoted man as our Moravian brethren are apt to be. John L. Merrill, a graduate of Dartmouth College and Princeton Theological Seminary, came into the church in 1850. He was first settled over the Presbyterian church, Chanceford, York County, Pa., afterwards at Aeworth, and is now the much-esteemed and successful pastor at Marlborough. Benjamin Merrill came into the church in 1851, graduated from the Scientific Department of Dartmouth College and from Princeton Theological Seminary, was first settled over a Presbyterian church, Cumberland County, Md., then at Pembroke, and is at present the acceptable pastor of the Presbyterian church, Ausable Forks, N. Y. V. J. Hartshorn, a graduate of Dartmouth College and Bangor Theological Seminary, was first settled over a church near Portland, Me., and afterwards labored for a time with much favor at Enfield, and is now in Hyannis, Mass. Levi Rodgers, a graduate of Dartmouth College and Andover Theological Seminary, is now the popular and useful pastor at Claremont. Lucien H. Frary graduated from Dartmouth College and Andover Theological Seminary, was first settled at Middleton, Mass., and is now the efficient pastor of the Union Church, Weymouth, Mass. Franklin P. Wood graduated from Dartmouth

College and received his theological education at Andover and Union Seminary, N. Y., and is at present the useful pastor, Acton, Mass. Charles H. Merrill, a graduate of Dartmouth College, and Andover Theological Seminary, was first settled at Mankato, Minn., and is now the scholarly and esteemed pastor of the church at West Brattleboro, Vt. Charles N. Flanders graduated from Dartmouth College and Andover Theological Seminary, and is now in his first pastorate at Westmoreland, an earnest and promising man.

We should also append to this list of ministers another class equally worthy of mention, who though not ministers are often better than ministers, and are sometimes the making of them. I refer to the wives of ministers whom this church has furnished. Leading the list is Hannah Johnston, who became the wife of Silas Mc Keen, D. D. Ann Gookin who married the Rev. E. J. Boardman, of Vermont, and her sister Rebecca who became the wife of the Rev. Mr. Tileston of Charlemont, Mass. Hannah Johnston and Rebecca D. Gookin it will be remembered were the first Sabbath school superintendents of this church. Nancy Pearson married the Rev. Christopher Marsh, of Roxbury, Mass. Sarah Merrill, sister of our senior deacon, became the wife of the Rev. Alfred Goldsmith, now of West Avon, Conn. Laura B. Merrill married the Rev. Chas. H. Merrill of West Brattleboro, Vt.; and Emma Page became the wife of the Rev. Charles N. Flanders of Westmoreland.

I do not think we have any reason to be ashamed of these two lists. They are Christian men and women who have filled and are filling a large measure of usefulness, nearly if not quite all have received the most thorough

training for their work,—graduates from colleges and female seminaries. In the future as in the past I trust we shall continue to hear good reports of those who are still in the Master's field.

The spirit of benevolence was cherished from the first. As early as 1794, the church voted to have a common stock of interest devoted to charitable and benevolent purposes. The contributions to this fund are voluntary. In 1795 the church voted to hold quarterly concerts of prayer. These meetings were quite likely the beginning of the monthly missionary concerts. Thus the spirit of special prayer and benevolence went hand in hand, and our fathers early recognized the truth that it is "more blessed to give than to receive."

The articles of faith adopted by the church at its organization were soon after changed as not being full and explicit enough. This second creed consisted of eleven articles, and is sufficiently full and orthodox. The church also appended to the covenant twelve "points" in explanation of what the covenant meant. The twelfth "point" is suggestive of Revolutionary scenes on the borders of which the church had its birth, and demands of all its members obedience to the laws of the land, providing they do not conflict with the laws of Christ. Our fathers were believers in loyalty and liberty both.

This second creed remained unchanged till the ministry of Mr. Wood, when it was revised, and this revised form continued in use until a recent date, when it was displaced for a briefer statement of faith more, as was thought, in accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ.

In looking over the records of this church one is impressed with what is a well known fact in the early history of our churches, that the matter of discipline was strongly emphasized. Church meetings were largely occupied with cases of various kinds of irregularity, some of them grave and complicated, others of a less serious character. In many cases the accused were brought to humble repentance and confession ; once in a while a member was cut off for persistency in a wrong course. No doubt our ancestors carried this matter of discipline too far, perverting what should only be an exceptional procedure into a general rule. We are reaping in our day the re-action of their extreme course by neglecting church discipline almost altogether, so that now it would seem as if it matters little what church members may do, however notoriously irregularly and disreputably they may walk, they are tolerated with apparent impunity until the churches of every name are covered all over with these moral barnacles. May there not be a safer and more judicious way ?

The Sabbath school has always been a prominent feature in the work of the church, being one of the first organized in this region, and owes its origin to the Rev. Mr. Sutherland of Bath who was a Scotchman and a Sabbath school worker in Edinburgh before he came to this country. The first superintendents were women. Library books then in use may still be found in some of the old families as heir-looms of earlier days in this field of Christian effort. Miss Eliza Cross, the oldest living member of the church, now in her eighty-seventh year, was also one of the earlier superintendents ; and amongst those more deeply interested in its aims and success were

Deas. Chester Farman and Henry Barstow. The records of the church testify to the fact that a very large per cent. of those regularly attending the Sabbath school have become hopefully pious. This has been more strikingly the fact in later years. The teachers and others have maintained a concert of secret prayer at 9 o'clock on Sabbath morning for God's blessing upon the school. The Christian usefulness of the Sabbath school has by no means been exhausted, indeed it is just taking its proper place in our thoughts and endeavors, and all who are connected with it as laborers should strive zealously to make it more truly the "hope of the church." The plain teaching of the word with personal interest in their welfare will bring multitudes to a Christian hope who otherwise might not be reached. Sabbath school workers have a rare opportunity for achieving splendid results.

Such, my friends, is a brief sketch of this church in its origin and work. It remains only to add a few words in bringing this review to a close. I think I may safely say the church with all its imperfections has been a useful church and a blessing to this community. The good which it has done cannot be estimated as we estimate ordinary things. The numbers which have from time to time been added to its list of membership is by no means a measure of its usefulness or the good it has accomplished. It has a life and influence apart from that, though that would be a grand work—so many persons endued through its instrumentality with a new life and hope. But the general influence for good of a Christian church is worthy the regard of all thoughtful persons. We have only to take the church with its moral safeguards and restraints, its educational and right-directing

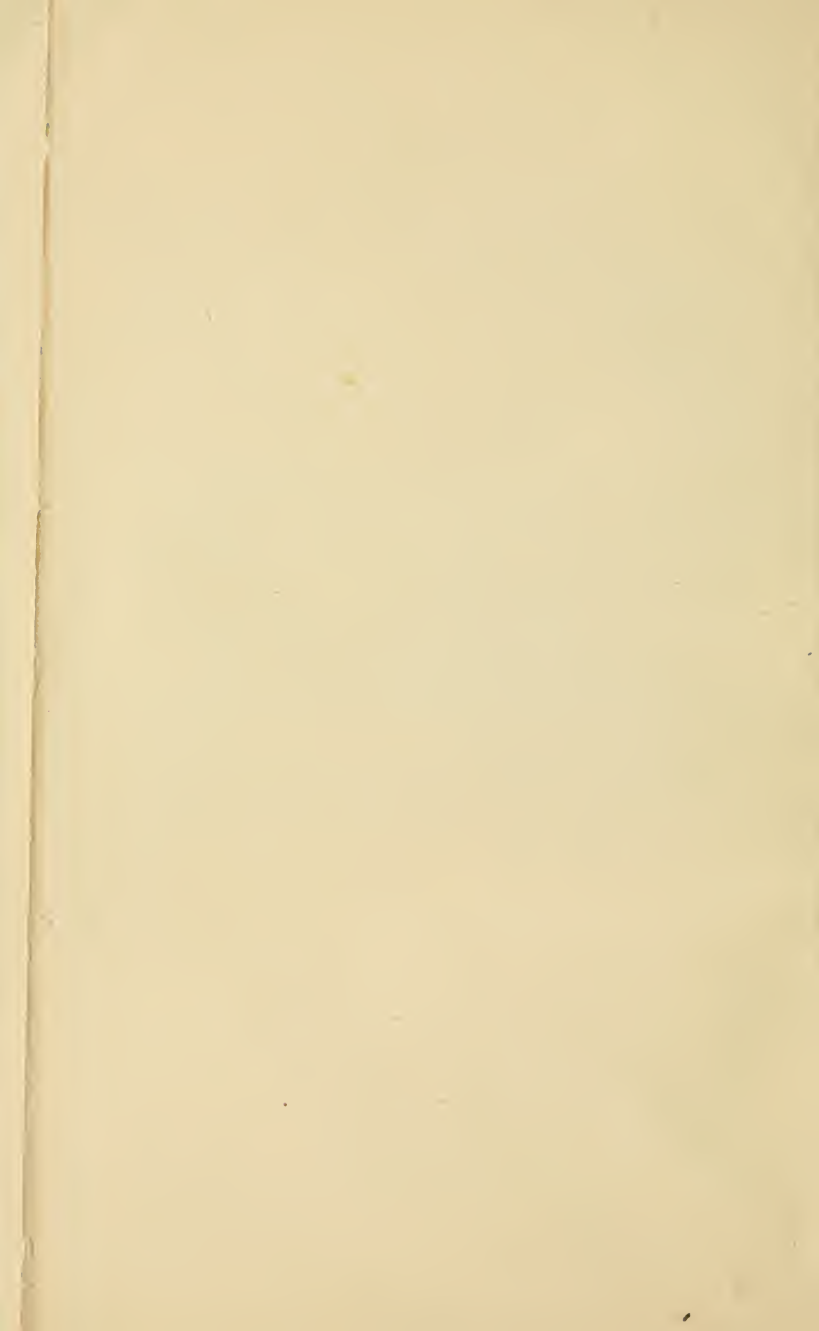
forces out of a community, in order to understand the vital position which it holds in the welfare of a people. We have simply to contrast those communities where unfortunately either no church has been established or permanently maintained, with such communities where a warm and secure place has welcomed and cherished it, if we would fully appreciate their moral difference. We need but study the religious character of families fostered under the care and guide of the church with those families who are aliens to such an influence, and the great good of a church in shaping the moral character of a people will be apparent to the dullest mind. It is just this power which to-day makes us what we are in all that is noble and right; and it is for us to say whether this church shall be more and more a source of good in this community. And to us is assigned the duty and opportunity of carrying forward and more fully completing the noble work which our fathers have begun. The years gone by are full of worthy lives and examples; and when again this church shall review its past history may we have been found true and faithful in our place. Let this be our prayer. Amen.

APPENDIX.

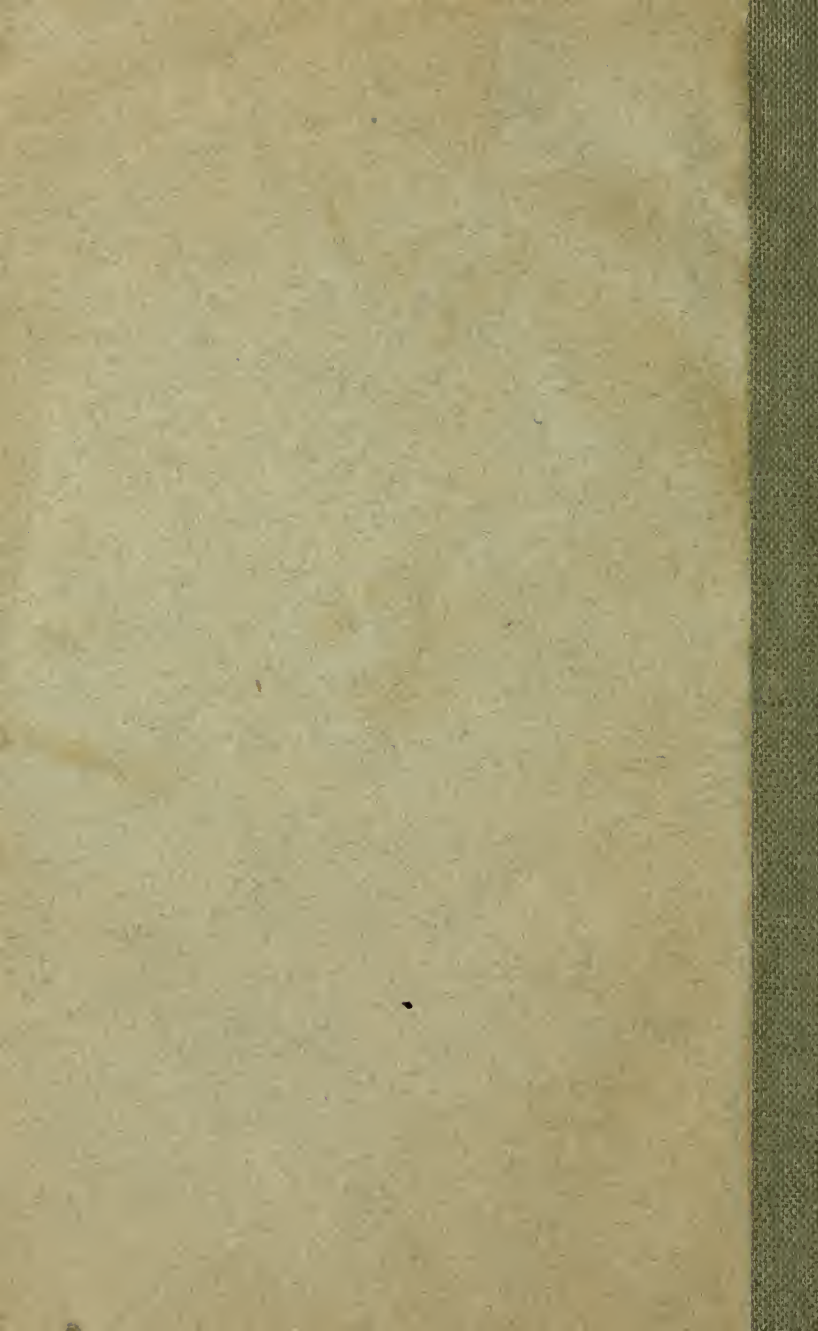
The contributions of the church for purely benevolent purposes from 1840 to the present time,—previous to this no record being kept, are \$ 11,190.66; the largest in a single year, 1865, was \$ 475.19; and the smallest, 1849, \$ 134.63. The contributions are taken up at communion services.

The salaries paid by the church and society have varied with the times. Mr. Powers received \$ 500 per annum. At present the salary is put at \$ 1000. The church also owns a parsonage, now in good repair within and without, which is given free of rent to the minister.

The whole number of persons connected with the church from its organization is 649; largest number received in a single year is 45 in 1831; largest membership in any one year 190; present membership, 169.







PHOTOMOUNT
PAMPHLET BINDER

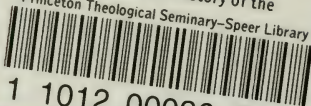


Manufactured by
GAYLORD BROS. Inc.
Syracuse, N. Y.
Stockton, Calif.

BX7150 .H35F5 B6

Centennial discourse : a history of the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00036 7641